

For More Information Refer To These Resources:

My Health Care Options

<http://hcqcc.hcf.state.ma.us/>

Use My Health Care Options to learn about the quality and cost of your health care and find and compare quality and costs among providers.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Medicare Hotline: (800) 633-4227

<http://www.hhs.gov/>

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides comprehensive information regarding resources that you may contact for specific health care conditions or questions.

Massachusetts Board of Registration in Medicine

Consumer Hotline: (800) 377-0550

<http://www.mass.gov/massmedboard>

The Board of Registration in Medicine provides information about physicians and other questions to ask your provider before receiving health care services.

National Institute of Health

Phone: (301) 496-4000

www.nih.gov

National Institutes of Health provides information such as the nature of various conditions, symptoms and manifestations, and procedures and treatment options.

Healthcare Finder

<http://healthfinder.gov/>

Healthcare Finder contains information on a wide range of topics on healthy living, has various tools on how to maintain such a lifestyle.

Healthcare Blue Book

<http://healthcarebluebook.com/>

Healthcare Blue Book will provide you cost estimates of various procedures and tests and useful cost-saving tips.

EMPOWERING HEALTHCARE CONSUMERS



Speaking with Your Healthcare Provider



Consumer Hotline: (617) 973-8787

Toll free: (888) 283-3757

<http://www.mass.gov/consumer>

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Deval L. Patrick
Governor



Barbara Anthony
Undersecretary

Doctor's Name:

Contact Information:

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Patient Records

Be sure to keep track of all your health records, payment records, and the medications you take. During any office visit, medical procedure, or emergency situation, be sure to tell your provider what these medications are, even in the case of any over-the-counter drugs and healthcare supplements you use. Your health care provider should always have the right information in order to answer your questions accurately.



Remember . . .

The next time you seek medical care, know your rights as a patient to be fully informed about the products or services you will receive. In the event that a physician or staff member is not able to answer your questions, do not hesitate to request that they follow-up with you with the information. This will help ensure that you make fully informed decisions.

TALK TO YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER ABOUT TREATMENT OPTIONS AND COSTS

Decisions involving your healthcare are some of the most important decisions you will make throughout your life, affecting you and those close to you. By working closely with your health care provider, asking questions and following up as you receive care, you can better understand your health status and conditions.

Take the time to research and consider different treatment possibilities. A better understanding of various treatment options will allow you to decide on the option that best fits your condition, your lifestyle, and your wallet.

It is important to understand your health care needs because uninformed decisions could lead to overly costly, undesirable, or unnecessary care. While there is an overwhelming amount of information available to guide you, this brochure will help to provide you with general information about managing your healthcare services and to direct you to important resources for additional healthcare information.



Your Power as a Health Care Consumer

Consumers are sovereign in the market place, and as a consumer, you should also feel sovereign in the healthcare market. When purchasing healthcare services or products, strive to become informed by researching conditions and the services that address those conditions. It is important to maintain a good relationship with your healthcare provider but you should never be shy about asking questions about your health status or about any services or products that are prescribed. Federal and State laws protect your rights, including the right to be fully informed about purchased services, so be sure to exercise these rights as a consumer of health care.

Consumer Costs

Until recently, healthcare spending in Massachusetts has increased dramatically. Even with the slowdown in healthcare costs, the issue continues to be a critical one for Massachusetts consumers and businesses. Similar to a consumer in the general retail market, you should strive to be conscientious about the costs of healthcare by comparing cost and quality of health services and treatment options. While the cost of treatments will differ among individuals, resources such as those listed on the back cover will help you

find estimate costs of different treatment options at different providers. These resources will not give you a precise out-of-pocket cost or a precise cost for certain treatment, however, it is important for you as a patient to have a general awareness of the cost of your healthcare and to look for the best price-quality option.



What to Consider After Treatment at an Emergency Care Facility (ER)

- Is this medication/procedure covered by my insurance company?
- How much will this medication, service, or visit cost me or my insurance company?
- Do I need to arrange any further care?
- What do I need to do to follow up?
- Who will bill me for these services and will there be separate bills from the doctor(s) and the laboratories?

Preparing to be Discharged From a Medical Care Facility

- What is my current diagnosis?
- Am I scheduled for any future visits or follow up tests?
- What symptoms should I look for or monitor?
- Whom should I contact in the event of any problems?
- Can I follow up with my primary care provider or is there someone else I should contact?
- Do I need continuing care services? If so, how do I make arrangements?
- Do I need to take any medications? What are the instructions for taking them?
- Could there be any complications in the future that I should be prepared for?
- Do I need to make any major diet or lifestyle changes to prevent future complications?

Questions to Consider While Being Screened or Tested for Certain Conditions

- What condition does this test/screening detect?
- Will I need to be re-tested/re-screened?
- What will happen if I do not get tested/screened?
- What are the side effects or risks in being tested/screened?
- Will I require an anesthetic for taking the test? If so, what are the side effects of this anesthetic?
- What do I need to do in preparation for this test/screening?
- What are the possible complications related to conducting this test/screening?
- What is the false-positive ratio for this test/screening?
- Can you perform the test/screening in your office, or will I need to go to a lab or other facility?

Questions to Consider About Taking Certain Medications

- Why do I need this medicine?
- What does this medicine do?
- What will happen if I do not take it?
- How long should I take it?
- If I do not notice any improvement, when should I contact you?
- What are the side effects of this medicine?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- Will this medicine interact with other medicines, vitamins or supplements I take?
- Is there a generic brand that I can take?

Exercising Your Rights as a Healthcare Consumer

You can exercise your rights as a consumer of healthcare services by asking your healthcare provider or staff questions about your medical care and health condition. Remember that you and your healthcare provider are a team, working towards providing you with appropriate care to ensure your good health.

Keep your rights as a healthcare consumer in mind when you will need healthcare services, and ask the following questions to help become a more informed consumer. You may want to use these questions as a foundation upon which to build a more complete set of questions for each particular situation.

Your Healthcare Rights

In addition to your right to be fully informed, Federal and State laws further secure the right to:

- Request treatment, as long as the requested treatment or services are medically appropriate and necessary;
- Refuse treatment;
- Maintain the confidentiality of medical records to the extent provided by law;
- Privacy during medical treatment within the capacity of the facility;
- Have reasonable requests be responded to promptly and adequately;
- Be free from all forms of abuse and harassment;
- Receive care in a safe setting;
- Obtain copies of all your medical records, physician memos and correspondence in your medical file;
- Receive an itemized bill upon request.

Your Annual Check-Up

- Are my vital signs normal or within accepted limits? Ask about your temperature, heart rate, blood pressure, respiratory rate, and weight.
- Is my health better, the same, or worse since my last check up?
- Given my personal and family medical history, do I have a higher chance of certain illnesses?
- Do I need any vaccinations or any other routine screenings or am I up to date?
- Do I need to start taking any medications?
- Should I continue or discontinue my current medications?

What to Ask About a Specific Illness or Condition

- Can you explain my illness or condition?
- What causes this illness or condition?
- Can I give this illness or condition to someone else?
- Is this something you treat often?
- How should this condition be treated?
- Are there long term side effects of the treatment?
- Should I see a specialist? Do you have a specialist you recommend?
- Should I have other tests or screenings? Why or why not?
- Are there risks to not treating my condition?
- Are there steps I can take to prevent this from happening again?

Questions When Considering Whether or Not to Have a Surgical Procedure

- Can you explain this procedure to me and why I need it?
- Is there an alternative for this particular procedure?
- What are the risks of having/ not having this procedure?
- How long will this procedure take?
- Will this be an inpatient or outpatient procedure?
- What do I need to do to prepare for this procedure?
- How often do you perform this procedure and what is your success rate?
- Are you certified in any surgical specialty related to this procedure?
- Will I need to be anesthetized for this procedure? If so, can you tell me about the kind of anesthesia I will need, and if there are any side effects related to the use of this anesthesia?
- If I have this procedure, can you give me a realistic assessment of how long recovery back to normal will take?

